

VICTIMS OF NAZISM

Targeting Romanies

Living a traditional nomadic (moving around with no fixed home) existence, about 30,000 Romanies (also called Roma or Gypsies throughout history) lived in Greater Germany and 1,000,000 in Eastern Europe, mainly in Romania or the Soviet Union. The Nazis built on a long history of prejudice against Romanies in Europe. The Nazis would measure faces, claiming that Romanies, like Jews, were a different race—a “life unworthy of life.”

Prejudice Against Blacks

There were few black people in Germany, and Nazi hatred of them emerged when Germany hosted the Olympic Games in 1936. To avoid shaking hands of black people who had won medals, such as American Jesse Owens, Hitler did not shake the hands of any winners. Propaganda Minister Goebbels called success by black people “a disgrace.”

The Germanization of Poles

The Nazis thought the Poles were subhuman and wanted their land. Although the Nazis persecuted the Poles and killed millions of them, they thought some Polish babies and children “looked” German. The Nazis kidnapped about 50,000 of them to be adopted by German parents and “Germanized.”

Political opponents

The Nazis would not tolerate opposition, whatever the “race” of the opponent. They banned other political parties and rooted out their members, especially communists because they believed that they conspired with Jews to rule the world. Many were imprisoned, tortured and forced into hard labor.

Homosexuals

The Nazis thought that homosexuals were inferior because they would not have children and continue the race. They also believed that homosexual males were not real men. Fearing that homosexuality would spread as a social disease, the Nazis shut down homosexual clubs and bars.

People with Disabilities

Nazi plans for the perfect race were threatened by the mentally ill and physically disabled, so at least 300,000 people were sterilized in 1934 to stop them from having children. Hereditary health cards were created to track any family history of disability.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Due to their faith, Jehovah's Witnesses do not support a government or carry weapons, so they did not support the Third Reich. By 1935, it was illegal to be a Jehovah's Witness and many were taken to camps.